Interview with Martha C. Mautner

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

MARTHA C. MAUTNER

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Q: Today I will be talking with Martha Mautner who had a career that extended over half a century in the field of foreign affairs. I will be speaking with her on behalf of the Oral History Program of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Martha, tell me how did you get interested in the field of foreign affairs? Was it something in your background, perhaps your education that brought you into the field?

MAUTNER: Basically speaking I was always interested in history and political science; that was my major in college. When I went to graduate school, it was chiefly because the only opportunities for women at that time, even if you had a college education, was as a stenographer's job somewhere and I couldn't type. I went to Fletcher for my MA degree and there, of course, the emphasis was all on international affairs and foreign affairs. The war was still on and that left the job market pretty much up in the air. During the Easter vacation in 1945, another Fletcher student and I came down to Washington to look for jobs after graduation. The State Department turned out to be the only government office that was hiring women with a promise of an overseas assignment. We both wanted to travel and, of course, travel had been impossible during the war years. So we signed up in a clerical capacity, that was the only thing available, and started to work on July 15, 1945.

Six weeks later, the two of us, because we both had graduate degrees, for some unknown reason were sent to the embassy in Moscow.

Q: Did you receive any training in Washington before you left?

MAUTNER: Yes, you had to pass a typing test, 35 words a minute. Since neither one of us could type, they made us type the same piece over and over again until we could get up to 35 words.

Q: Did you have any choice of your assignment or were you just told you were going to Moscow?

MAUTNER: We were asked where we would like to go and both of us thought Germany would be good because we had some knowledge of German from school, but the only spot that had an opening for two at the same time, and the two of us were pretty young and naive and scared about going off on our own, was Moscow. We had no background whatsoever.

Q: Now this was shortly after the war in Europe, in 1945. Tell me something about the atmosphere in Moscow in those days? What were the conditions like on your arrival there?

MAUTNER: It is hard to describe them from today's context because you also have to realize I was looking at it as a 21 year old somebody who had never been out of the United States and who took everything for granted.

We were the first State Department people going to Moscow who traveled through Europe. Prior to that everyone had gone via Casablanca, Cairo, Tehran and up that way. So we were sort of a novelty. All of these countries were militarily occupied and we were in the hands of the military.

Q: By traveling through Europe you mean that you went through France and then Germany?

MAUTNER: Yes, and then flew on from Berlin to Moscow. So, I was in Berlin in September, 1945 and I gather we were the first female civilians who had gotten there to fall in the hands of the visitor bureau. They stalled our departure as long as possible but finally arranged for us to get on one of the Russian military aircraft going into Moscow in the latter part of September.

We arrived at Centralny Airport, the military airport right in the center of Moscow, (that was long before they had the big ones outside the city) and were just dumped there. Somebody called the embassy and eventually somebody picked us up and brought us to a billet. We went on from there just taking it as it was.

The atmosphere was very peculiar. In the first place, there were few families there at the embassy. The only wives who were allowed to come were those who were working at the embassy—because of the housing shortage. That made quite a different atmosphere. Everybody was in the same situation. There were only about 40-45 people on the staff and altogether a foreign colony of maybe 4-500 in all of Moscow, a city of 8 million or so. We were as isolated from the Russian population as the Soviet government could keep us isolated.

Q: Despite the alliance we had had during the war?

MAUTNER: You could still have contact, you could get out and talk to people, but you didn't talk to them twice. The atmosphere was relaxed in one sense: there were no overt restrictions. But at the same time you still had the sense that Soviet people were staying away from foreigners. So, the foreign colony was pretty much incestuous in that we were kept on top of each other all of the time.

But the atmosphere, the morale in the embassy, was very good because of the fact we were all in the same boat. There was no class distinction. The old style Foreign Service wives who made the distinction between themselves and the clerical staff didn't exist because everybody was working. There were only one or two families there and then chiefly because the officer was able to find housing outside on his own. So, for young unattached females, it was a delightful time. Those were the days in the Foreign Service when Foreign Service officers usually didn't get married until they were first secretaries. Bachelor status was preferred because you always needed extra men for dinner. So that meant we had great pickings.

Q: What did you do there?

MAUTNER: I started out as a code clerk, and the other girl I went with was in charge of the file room. Later I moved up into a research position. They had three or four people who did research. Bob Tucker, who became quite famous later on as a historian at Princeton, was there, and Tom Whitney and Spencer Barnes, were all doing background work. I, because of my graduate school background, got moved into that too and was able to carve out a place for myself.

Q: Your ambassador at the time was Averell Harriman?

MAUTNER: Averell Harriman was ambassador when I arrived and then was succeeded by Bedell Smith in the later part of 1946.

Q: Did you have any contact with them?

MAUTNER: Well, much more with Smith than with Harriman. Harriman was never really around the embassy. In fact, I don't ever recall him coming into the embassy building. He did all his work out at Spaso House.

Q: Who was your supervisor there?

MAUTNER: In the code room it was Tommy Senter, but basically supervision came out of the DCM's office. At that time it was George Kennan who had oversight of everything. But there was very little hierarchy in the embassy. Everybody seemed to be on an equal plane.

Q: Rather democratic I would gather.

MAUTNER: Yes. Freddy Reinhardt, Merritt Cootes, Roger Tyler, Dick Davis, Jack McSweeney, John Davies...there were five or six of the first secretaries all working sort of on the same level and everyone pitching in together.

Q: Now this is a period where George Kennan became famous with his long telegram. Were you involved in this at all?

MAUTNER: Ah, yes, this was my great encounter with history. I happened to have late duty in the code room the night Kennan brought in his cable. I happened to have a heavy date that night because there was a big dance at one of the other embassies and I wanted to get out early. He came in at about 7:00 with this five-part opus. My encounter with history involved trying to talk him out of sending it. He didn't pay any attention to me.

Q: Well, history might have changed.

MAUTNER: He said they had asked for that and he was going to give it to them.

Q: Did you have a chance to learn any of the Russian language while over there?

MAUTNER: Oh, yes, we started Russian language lessons as soon as we arrived. I eventually ended up with an ability to read, but not to a serious professional level. I never had any formal training in it.

Q: Now you were there during that famous Foreign Minister's conference in March, 1947, with Secretary Marshall and Molotov, etc. Do you have any remembrances of that?

MAUTNER: Oh yes, very, very vivid remembrances. In the first place, it was quite an occasion because of the big invasion of all kinds of Americans, particularly from Berlin. I shared an apartment with two other girls, one of whom had come from Berlin and was very well acquainted with General William Draper. So, as soon as Draper arrived, he turned up at the apartment. This was one very funny episode because when the plane crews came in with the delegations, the Air Force officers immediately descended on our apartment because they had messages for us from people back in Berlin, that they should look us up, girls, you know. They were all sitting around the apartment trying to impress us with their flyboy stuff when the door bell rang, and there was General Draper walking in. You never saw a batch of Air Force lieutenants disappearing in such a hurry!

The conference, itself, was impressive. John Davies had a very smart idea. He got me detached from my regular duties to set up a reference center in the embassy library with all sorts of background material about the Soviet Union—Russian social studies, histories, pieces of information designed to give the many journalists a sense, an idea of what was really going on there. None of them had much background in the field. So I rode herd over the backgrounding for journalists on the Soviet scene—not, of course, on the activities of the conference. That was quite an interesting operation.

Then a good friend of mine who was a first secretary at the British embassy and had no reverence or respect for authority most of the time, swiped the pass of a British delegation economist and gave it to me, so I went to one of the sessions of the conference as a member of the British delegation. So I was able to watch Molotov in action. One episode there that I enjoyed: John Foster Dulles was present and spent the whole time doodling the flags that were in the center of the table, coloring them up in great detail. When the session was over and we were standing around chatting, my English friend picked up the doodle Dulles had done and showed it to him saying, “That is a very professional doodle, Mr. Dulles.” Dulles responded, “Do you want me to autograph it?” So, I had Dulles' autograph on this doodle.

Q: That was the first Mautner-Dulles confrontation I take it?

MAUTNER: Yes, it was.

Q: Our delegation must have been very disappointed with the results of that conference.

MAUTNER: They were disappointed in the sense that on the formal agenda, nothing positive had come out of it. On the other hand, everybody was jubilant that we had finally laid down the line to the Soviets; that was the time the Truman Doctrine was announced. There was this sense of finally having enough courage to stand up and not take anymore. So you had this mixed result, the idea that no solution to the world's problems was imminent but at least the air had been cleared.

Q: Did you get a chance to travel at all while in Moscow?

MAUTNER: Not very extensively. I got up to Leningrad, of course, on my way in and out on vacation trips. And I was down through the Ukraine to Odessa on a trip. In the Moscow area, technically speaking we were not allowed more than 25 kilometers outside of the city without special permission. But you couldn't get very far anyway because there weren't many driveable roads. Everything had been damaged and you couldn't have stayed overnight. There were no facilities. But we did drive out as far as we could and saw the rubble, particularly the areas that had been in the path of the German invasion.

Q: While you were in Moscow during that time did you feel that you were under surveillance when you walked around?

MAUTNER: Not when you walked around, but we always had the feeling that big brother was watching you. Any time you met a Russian, or dealt with some of the more obvious Soviets who worked at the embassy, you knew it was being reported back. Our Russian teacher, who we figured was at least a Lt. Colonel in the NKVD at that time, arranged for my roommate and me to meet some Russian fellows “accidentally”. She got a young navy

lieutenant and I got a chap from the ministry of foreign trade. They took us out for a while, but since nothing came of it they gave up. But you knew what was happening, and you assumed that anything you said in your apartment was being recorded.

Q: That was the time when we lost that young lady, Annabelle Bucar, I think.

MAUTNER: Yes, in fact, when I came back on home leave at the end of 1947, she gave me a whole list of things that she wanted her family to send. A month or two later, after the items had been sent, the great announcement of her defection was made.

Q: Is she still in Russia?

MAUTNER: Yes. She worked for Radio Moscow for years. FBIS picked up a lot of these broadcasts. She and Joey Adamov (I think that was his name) had a talk show in the English language until roughly eight years ago. She came back to the United States several times to visit her family after the thaw.

Q: Any other comments on your tour in Moscow before we go on to other things?

MAUTNER: Well, it was a most fascinating and informative first assignment experience. Totally different from anything to which I had been exposed. But it was the beginning in a lifelong involvement with Soviet and Russian affairs. The mentorship that you got there from people like John Davies or George Kennan was invaluable. They encouraged you.

Q: You could hardly have done better than that.

MAUTNER: Elbridge Durbrow was another one who pushed you along.

Q: In 1948 you were transferred back to the Department and I gather you went into research?

MAUTNER: Yes, INR.

Q: Was it called INR at the time?

MAUTNER: OIR, I think. That name changed so many times. I was assigned there because Personnel had a hard time figuring out where to put women who weren't strictly clerical.

Q: What was your job there?

MAUTNER: Basically in the Soviet research area. At the beginning it was basic research on Soviet internal issues, but I was never one who was enamored with deep core research. Then the office set up a current intelligence outfit which produced a lot of pieces about what day-to-day reality was like in the Soviet Union. They might be on Soviet education, or the church system, religion, or anything of this nature. Using all available source material as background, we would produce a sanitized piece that could be made available to journalists for their own purposes. A couple of times we practically won the Stalin prize because a column would appear in the New York Times under the name of a well-known journalist which was largely taken from one of these documents. If the Soviet minister of education or another official protested violently about this canard in a letter to the Times, that was where you got your greatest accolades.

But the project which did the most for my professional reputation was the “Soviet World Outlook”, a collection of quotations from the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. I had begun collecting them in Moscow to provide handy citations for inclusion in embassy think pieces, and added more in Washington. These were published as an INR booklet and became so popular in the Department and academia that the Department issued a second edition and charged $1.50 a copy. Those were the days when everyone was citing Lenin and Stalin to prove a point but no one bothered to read the basic texts. So it was a very handy reference—several thousand copies were sold.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the organization of OIR at that time? Who was the head of it and was it large?

MAUTNER: It was a tremendous outfit at that time because it was essentially the OSS research office which had been taken over intact by the State Department. It was a very departmentalized operation then. My experience was exclusively with the Soviet side. Mose Harvey was in charge of that particular outfit and he ran it as a personal fiefdom. And very effectively too. It had a very extensive staff of really serious scholars on Soviet and Russian affairs. One has to remember that OIR was really the only major center for that kind of work in the years immediately after the end of the war. The universities hadn't developed their Soviet Studies schools at that time.

Q: What was your relations with the new CIA? Had they gotten into this at your level?

MAUTNER: Well, you knew some of the people individually, but most of the OIR-CIA interaction was at a higher level than mine.

Q: There wasn't a lot of cross-fertilization at the working level?

MAUTNER: Not at the working level because it was really only a beginning—before CIA had developed its own research operations on a large scale.

I stayed in the Soviet research office until early 1949 when I was taken out of there and assigned to the Soviet desk in the European Bureau.

Q: What was the relationship of OIR with the geographic bureaus and the policy planning staff?

MAUTNER: There wasn't much, except at the very top. The point was OIR was considered a foreign body in the State Department and there was a big bureaucratic attempt to kill it. The old mainline officers didn't like the idea of having a second-guess outfit there. So,

I would say there was a - I wouldn't say hostile relationship, but it surely wasn't friendly - with very little contact.

Q: So, when you moved, you went to the enemy by moving to the desk?

MAUTNER: That was because people I had been working with in Moscow, like Freddy Reinhardt, Dave Henry, Jack McSweeney and others, had been assigned back to the Department.

I was there for a while and then about the latter part of 1949, Kennan asked me to come up to his office as research aide. He had been moved from the Policy Planning staff to the Office of Counselor and Nitze was phasing in as head of the Policy Planning staff. As Counselor, Kennan wanted some help in background research and remembered me from Moscow.

Q: That must have been a real experience for you getting back together with George Kennan. Tell me something about your work with him, what were you doing?

MAUTNER: He wanted a lot of background data. It could be very light stuff or very heavy stuff depending on the circumstances. For instance, when he was going up to New York to a Council on Foreign Relations meeting and traveling on the train with Walter Lippmann, he wanted data that would counter all the arguments Lippmann was making in the newspapers against our containment policy or opposing something that Kennan was advocating. So I would dig up the requisite data. I remember another project when there was talk about world energy resources petering out, oil supplies, etc. That was one time when old OIR contacts were very useful because I got them to put together a big piece showing how the actual reserves were such that we didn't need to worry for some years to come.

The project that fascinated me the most was Kennan wanting a re-evaluation of all of the papers the Policy Planning staff had done from 1946-47 until the end of his tenure

there. So I was handed this whole stack of studies dealing with everything from Russia to Middle East policy to Antarctica, etc., and spent my time reading them and trying to evaluate what had happened to them, how much had been put into effect, how much had been lost by the wayside, how much was misdirected, etc. That was really an amazing experience. I still remember there were 3 volumes, leather bound, that had the first drafts of all these reports in them. They were magnificent pieces of draftsmanship and stood on their own. The only one that I can still recall that hadn't been implemented at the time was on Antarctica because it was about 20 years too early. It has been since.

Q: Those were the days when we had some excellent drafting officers in the Department.

MAUTNER: We also had something which you will never have again and that was a tabula rasa. You had a period when the world had changed fundamentally and you could start from scratch designing a whole new balance of power, whole new relationships. The United States was for the first time getting involved deeply in this on a long-term basis and beginning to think in terms of long-range projections. And you had a handful of people who had been for years absorbing all of the background information and experience necessary to be capable of formulating visions of this nature. It just clicked. You will never have that again.

Q: The Policy Planning staff was born at the right time.

MAUTNER: Yes. And probably, if you are talking about policy planning, that was the only time that it could have existed in that fashion. What has happened since has been mostly tinkering on the basis of those policies. Just readapting them. You just don't have the kind of world that allows you to suddenly start from scratch.

Q: During that period we were involved in the Berlin Blockade. Did you and Mr. Kennan get at all involved in that?

MAUTNER: Kennan was very much interested in that but at the time I was unfamiliar with the details on the ground, what the scene was actually like in Germany. When I eventually did get more exposure, I came to think his views on this subject were a little skewed—and I think this is applicable to many well-known Soviet experts. They knew Soviet mentality well, but were not so familiar with the day-to-day problems on the ground which we and the Soviets were confronting. The experts were trying to resolve our differences at a higher level of principle, thinking you could get agreement, a modus vivendi, with the Soviets (which you probably could have) and all would be well. But the point was that under any such agreement, the Soviets would still retain a free hand to do things that would whittle away our position in Europe on the ground. And there I think Kennan and some others were a little bit off. As it was, he never thought Germany would get back on its feet for 40 or 50 years.

Q: Well, I suppose those of us who had a cursory look at it in 1945-46 might have seen the basis for that reasoning.

MAUTNER: It was a very rational, common sensible approach, but after you had dealt with this Soviet occupation of Germany on the ground for a while, you were getting a different perspective of what they were after and how you had to keep drawing the line at the smallest detail, not just expect big top level “understandings” to work.

Q: Turning from that, let's turn to your career. This was the time you became a Foreign Service officer. Tell us how that happened?

MAUTNER: I had taken the Foreign Service examination in Moscow in 1947 and passed it and the orals in 1948. That was one of the reasons that I was already in the professional track back in the Department. There was a hold on any FS appointments at that time, so those of us who passed the exams and had jobs in the Department already were told to wait while the Manpower Act was in effect. We just stayed on the job there. My commission came through when finally the roadblock eased in 1950. That sort of coincided

with the time Kennan was leaving the Department and was a good time for me to move on. I wanted to go behind the Curtain again because I had been so fascinated by it. The people on the Policy Planning staff were very nice and put in their oar and got me an assignment to Berlin.

Q: Did you have any training at FSI before you left?

MAUTNER: I have never had any training from the Department at all, except on the job. The only formality was when we first went into the Foreign Service in 1945 and attended a two-day session when they showed you what a despatch and airgram looked like. But I was never sent to any training course. Language training, for instance, I took on my own at local universities and my own time.

Q: Then you arrived in Berlin the summer of 1950?

MAUTNER: Yes. We were all dumped in Frankfurt until they figured out how assignments in Berlin would work out. On my arrival in Berlin I started out right away in the political section with Rebecca Wellington and Eric Wendelin.

Q: That is where we met. What was your reaction on arriving in Berlin?

MAUTNER: I had been through Berlin before, in 1945, '46 and '47, and, of course, it had improved tremendously. But you know how much of a cocoon you lived in in Berlin in those days of the military occupation. I found it quite enjoyable, made lots of friends.

Q: Did you find any sense of discrimination as a woman trying to operate as an officer in Berlin?

MAUTNER: Not at that time. In fact, you know there was usually no discrimination against youngish, unattached females. The theory was it wasn't a bad idea to have them because it provided something for unattached male Foreign Service officers to latch on to, so they wouldn't have to go through another security check. I never was conscious of any

problems except from the wives of some senior officers who had been accustomed to kowtowing from all females at a post.

Q: What were your assignments there?

MAUTNER: Well, I was first assigned to the political section and began just reading the newspapers and trying to get a feel of the place. A little later I was assigned to the Kommandatura, and had that job as well.

Q: Tell us a little about the Kommandatura.

MAUTNER: It was an Allied tripartite agency, US, British and French, supervising Berlin municipal affairs. Our political committee met once a week with the chairmanship rotating on a monthly basis, by country. The food situation altered by country as well. When the French were in the chair, one always liked the lunches there. Basically, the work involved Berlin domestic issues affecting Allied rights, or the occupation legislation that applied to Berlin. We went through a great exercise before I left, trying to eliminate all obsolete pieces of legislation, get them off the books. It was a great education to see the difference between the British, French and American viewpoints on all of these issues. We on the American side were allowed considerable amount of leeway which, I must say, is something you really appreciate as a junior officer. Nobody rode herd over what you did. You were allowed to make your own judgments on subjects. If you screwed up, it was your own fault. Otherwise, you were allowed to act alone and use your own initiative.

Q: Who was your supervisor in Berlin?

MAUTNER: Rebecca Wellington was my immediate supervisor and Eric Wendelin was over her.

One of the things that I got into on the side, although we had a whole office that covered Eastern affairs and I was not part of that office, but because I was always interested in

Eastern affairs, I used to read the Tagliche Rundschau and the Neues Deutschland on a regular basis. Once in the Neues Deutschland I spotted...

Q: The Neues Deutschland was the newspaper of the German Communist Party and the Tagliche Rundschau being the Soviet Army main paper in Germany.

MAUTNER: ...I spotted big excerpts that were alleged to have been taken from the diary of an American army general who was commenting indiscreetly on the local scene in Moscow and elsewhere. It turned out that the general was the military attach# in Moscow who had been on a visit to Frankfurt and his diary had been stolen from one of the hotels by a East German agent. Well, it struck me rather amusing that this sort of stuff was appearing in the Neues Deutschland, so I cut out the article and mailed it to Jack McSweeney who was back at the embassy in Moscow. Anyhow, Jack took one look and discovered what it was. The embassy went through the ceiling because here was the military attach#'s private diary being exposed. Of course, we realized later there was a big dichotomy between what the East German intelligence service did on their own and what the Soviets did, despite a lot of coordination. This was an East German operation and Moscow wasn't yet even aware of it so the poor general was railroaded out of Moscow immediately before anybody found out. I got calls from all kinds of security people afterwards. It turned out that nobody else in Berlin seems to have spotted this article, including the many intelligence agencies reading these papers.

Q: I was in London at the time and I remember shortly thereafter we received a warning about keeping diaries.

MAUTNER: It was funny that with all the occupation establishments in Berlin, nobody had spotted that article or had registered what it meant.

Q: And we had a lot of intelligence people there too.

MAUTNER: We had a whole panoply. And then I got a blast from security: why did I send that in the open mail?...a newspaper clipping!

Q: Did you have a chance to use your Russian at all?

MAUTNER: Not much and only in one respect during the latter part of my stay there after Khrushchev came in and we began to have more contacts with the Soviets. A couple of times they would come over to various social functions. However, I did have a Russian teacher while I was there, doing it on the side. Karl and I made a trip into Moscow from Berlin in 1957. It was an eye opener for Karl because he had never been there before. For me it was an eye opener to see how things had relaxed and improved.

Q: Did you have any opportunity of getting into the Soviet Zone of Germany?

MAUTNER: Several times. There wasn't much incentive to do it. We would go over to East Berlin on a regular basis, that was no problem. I went down to the Leipzig Fair, each spring, drove down there. Other than that, very little, except when you were going to or through Poland.

Q: Did the mission in Berlin get its instruction directly from Washington or from the embassy in Bonn or from both?

MAUTNER: It was always both. The embassy in Bonn would have liked to give us instructions, but Berlin always maintained its sense of autonomy, not independence, but autonomy, wherever possible and had free initiative. It could send things directly in to the Department.

Q: Even though the blockade had ended, there were still continuing harassments by the Soviets interfering with the traffic in various ways. Did you have any unpleasantness with that?

MAUTNER: We were never personally harassed or stopped or anything of this nature, but it was always there hanging in the background. There was always this sense of pressure and tension that you had to be alert, especially if you had a family there or anything like that. You never knew what could happen. At the time of the Hungarian Uprising, for instance, when the reaction in Berlin was so passionate at the Soviet invasion in Hungary. That, of course, was the time that Willy Brandt made his first international impact when he stopped the crowds from marching on the Brandenburg Gate. That night in particular was a serious affair because the East Germans had water cannons out already and the Soviets were...

Q: It could have been an ugly incident.

MAUTNER: Yes, it could have been an ugly incident. For us, personally, it had a decidedly positive consequence because it was the night of November 3, 1956 that the Russians marched. The afternoon of the third, one of our children, a three-year-old, came down with meningitis and, of course, this is always a shock to parents who got her down to the military hospital. Well, the whole hospital was put on the alert because of the demonstrations in Berlin and the fear of a war starting. The doctors had nothing to do but stand around and take care of this 3 year old child, so she got the best of all possible attention. It was a harrowing evening, but on the other hand, something turned out for the better.

Q: You were there also when one of our Foreign Service officers, Greg Henderson, was arrested, I believe, in East Berlin. Did that cause a major incident between the East Germans and ourselves?

MAUTNER: Well, it was an incident, but everybody who knew Greg didn't take it all that seriously. They figured he would get out fairly quickly, and he did. But, it had to be dealt with as it was. Every once in a while something similar happened. The Americans didn't suffer extraordinarily. It was what happened to a lot of the Germans like Dr. Linse, and

others, who were kidnapped and never appeared again, or the police who were arrested and came back ten years later from Siberia, or the student activists treated the same way.

Q: Now you were also there during the Communist Youth Festival in East Berlin in 1951 where we in the West, I gather, had some propaganda triumphs. Can you talk a little bit about that?

MAUTNER: Oh, that was a great occasion. We worked very hard trying to figure out activities that would entice the youth being brought to East Berlin over to West Berlin. We had a little task force that came up with all kinds of ideas and, of course, the city authorities were doing the same and we coordinated our activities with them. It was an eminently successful affair of, shall we say, suborning young impressionable people by showing them the outside world. A long lasting effect? Who knows? But it was the exposure to that kind of thing that led to a lot of later defections. It was one of the reason Baryshnikov and others defected later on. They had been part of the Soviet delegations to world youth festivals, saw something of the outside world and decided to leave.

We were over to East Berlin for all of these fairs, walking around. We had free access at the time being members of the allies. And, there was a relaxed atmosphere. But that was when, of course, Greg Henderson got himself picked up because of his contact with the North Koreans. They were probably more under surveillance than anybody else at that time.

Q: I believe it was in 1952 your status changed when matrimony hit you and you married Karl Mautner, who was in the Foreign Service in Berlin. Did you have to resign or were you told to resign?

MAUTNER: Well, the Foreign Service regulations at the time specified that a woman officer had to resign with marriage. We got married in October, 1951, and I wrote to Elbridge Durbrow, who was at that time head of Foreign Service Personnel and told him I had no desire to resign. I wanted to stay on, and felt I was doing useful work. He

said fine, since I was on the promotion list that year and he would stick to it. So I stayed on open-endedly and then got caught in the big cutback on staff when the Eisenhower administration came in. They were looking for any bodies that they could lop off. So, Durbrow's decision to let me stay on was overturned. At that point I had to retire and spent a year domesticated and, I must say, going stir crazy.

Q: But in that same year, 1953, there were some very interesting happenings. For instance, Mayor Reuter died. You might say a word about his effect on the situation in Berlin.

MAUTNER: Well, his death had been preceded in 1953 with the revolt in East Berlin.

Q: Yes, perhaps you could tie them together.

MAUTNER: The revolt in East Berlin, of course, was the first real revolt against Soviet occupation in any part of Eastern Europe and it was quite a violent affair. We only discovered recently from the declassified Soviet and East German documents how many people were actually executed. About 400 or so died in the violence at that time; some were executed, some killed in the fighting.

That was really the first big, dramatic scene of violence in the city. Of course, we were there at the time and experienced the after effects. It also highlighted the variations between the various allies on the subject. The British were worried stiff that the occupation forces might be attacked and they might have to take action.

Q: Yes, I was in London at that time and I well remember their concern.

MAUTNER: Oh, God, they were worried. Those of us with a Soviet background knew that the only way you dealt effectively with the Soviets was to stand up to them. The French, I think, backed us up on that stance. But the allied authorities did not want to be identified with any heroic actions on the part of an occupied population, and had very differing views

of how you distanced yourself from all of this. They didn't want Adenauer to come to Berlin. They didn't want to make a great show. A ceremony was held in the City Hall as a tribute for those who were killed; I think there were six or eight West Berliners who died in East Berlin during the turmoil. There is a nice photograph of the assembly in the City Hall which shows the three Allied liaison officers' regular places, and only the American liaison officer was present in his.

Q: I should mention that the American liaison officer was Martha's husband, Karl Mautner.

MAUTNER: The other two places were empty. And, at the funeral services for the ones who died in East Berlin, the commandants did not go with the official corteges out to the cemetery. They did attend the Rathaus (City Hall) ceremony, but the liaison officers were delegated to represent them in the cortege. I will say this for Cecil Lyons: he gave us his big long Cadillac, so the US liaison officer went in style. We drove off from the Rathaus with the cortege, but stopped as soon as we were out of sight, pulled out the American flag and put it on the car so that the Germans would know there was an official American presence. Five or ten minutes later, suddenly coming up behind us was a car with the French liaison officer, who wasn't going to miss anything.

Anyhow, that was June 17 which reverberated for a long time. Reuter died in September. We were on vacation and heard the news somewhere in Bavaria and came back immediately. He obviously left a big gap because Reuter was more than just the Mayor; he was a symbol.

Q: He was a hero, a symbol and a lot of other things in Berlin.

MAUTNER: Yes, and he had a political sense that held everything together. It took a long time before the city got another one like him.

Q: Can you say a thing or two about the Foreign Ministers conference that was held in 1954?

MAUTNER: Malenkov's proposal a few months earlier that the Russians join NATO caught everybody by surprise. But there was hope when the conference opened that the Russians might be prepared to be accommodating because after Stalin's death in 1953 there had also been signs of easing up. But Molotov was as cold as the weather and everybody went home disappointed that nothing was going to change. Of course, not realizing that the big problem had less to do with Molotov's attitude than it had to do with domestic politics back in Moscow, where they were fighting over this whole issue of East-West relations. Eventually Molotov was out when Khrushchev consolidated his control.

Q: Since you had to resign as a Foreign Service officer, did you take up any other work while you were in Berlin?

MAUTNER: Oh yes, I got picked up then by the military doing the same kind of reporting I had been doing at the mission, dealing basically then with East German matters, technical development in East Germany, etc.

Q: Did they give you a civil service ranking?

MAUTNER: Yes, and that was very handy because it kept the continuity.

Q: This was a period when the East Germans were gradually getting more control given them by the Soviet Union such as border control and access to Berlin. Did your reporting in any way get into these matters?

MAUTNER: Oh, yes. It involved really a consolidation of their position, a very definite evolution there after the effects of June 17 had worn off. You had a lot of to-ing and fro-ing between the East Germans and the Soviets. The Soviets' idea, particularly under Khrushchev, was to find something in the way of a more normalized modus vivendi in Europe instead of this constant confrontation over Berlin. So, the East Germans were given a lot more leeway to consolidate local matters in their own way, while the Soviets

remained responsible for higher echelon issues. The basic idea was to assure East Germany permanent status in the great Soviet world plan, if such ever existed.

So, about 1956 or '57, the East German intelligence services rolled up most of the activities of the West German services; the famous Gehlen Organization which thought it had penetrated the whole system. The East Germans just rolled up their operations and dropped the curtain very firmly, making it harder and harder to get data out of there.

Q: Speaking of that sort of thing, this is the period of the tunnel. Could you say a few words about that?

MAUTNER: Oh, that was a lovely operation. It operated for quite some time. They are still fighting about whether it was found because of Soviet moles in the West - some say they tipped off the Soviets - but a lot of the people on the intelligence side claim the Soviets got wind of it because of power variances in the telephone lines going through East Germany and began tracking them down. It may have been both: somebody told them of the existence of a big operation somewhere and they found it by monitoring variation in power levels.

Anyhow, it operated very effectively for a long time. One of our good friends in Berlin, the journalist Lothar Loewe, always proudly claimed he was the first Westerner to get in that tunnel when the Soviets, with great fanfare, opened it up. He ran right through from the eastern end and said you could still see evidence that the Americans had left in a hurry. Coffee cups were still sitting on the table. But he thought it was a wonderful operation.

Q: It went on for several years?

MAUTNER: Not years. I think it operated for about a year effectively.

Q: We were tapping into the telephone communications?

MAUTNER: Into the telephone lines and you got all kinds of stuff. Not only good intelligence information, but all of the claptrap that surrounded daily military life - officers' wives complaining about not being able to get out, or chewing out their husbands. Some of it was quite juicy.

Q: Some of that landed on your desk I presume?

MAUTNER: Oh, yes, we saw most of the useful material.

Q: Did the uprising in 1956 in Hungary and Poland have any resonance in Germany, East Berlin or East Germany?

MAUTNER: Very much so. I mentioned earlier about what had happened on the Western side in 1953, emotions running high and pressure to do something. Inside East Germany the impact of Poland and Hungary was significant. On one hand, you had a situation where the Soviets did not have to use force because the Polish Communists were strong and trying to bring the situation under control, but in a Polish fashion. The Chinese very astutely, Zhou En-lai was there at the time, warned Moscow that the Poles could handle this themselves and you would just get a blood bath by bringing in Russian troops.

But, in the Hungarian case, the Party had lost control of the situation and it took outside force to subdue the population. So you got this mixed message seeping throughout the whole system. The East German party's reaction was, “See, we told you so. You start loosening up and this is what happens.” They used that as an excuse for tightening controls and put pressure on the Soviets to do something about Berlin.

Q: Which led to the Khrushchev ultimatum in 1958, to make Berlin a self-governing entity of its own.

MAUTNER: Yes, he tried everything to resolve the Berlin question because Berlin was a constant point of East-West friction, and constantly creating all kinds of problems inside the Eastern empire of the Soviet Union.

I was back in Washington at that time. The ultimatum was issued but, if you read the East German press, you smelled it coming almost nine months, a year, ahead. Articles kept appearing hinting that some move was in the mill. The East Germans were putting the pressure on Moscow to get action.

Those of us who knew the scene didn't believe the ultimatum would actually be implemented. On the other hand, we knew Khrushchev wanted some kind of a deal, any kind of a deal he could get, that would ease international tension and the Berlin problem. Of course, what he got out of the ultimatum was an invitation to Camp David, the 1959 visit to the United States.

Q: And later the Wall.

MAUTNER: Well, that was because nothing really changed after Camp David. He kept trying and then took the halfway measure of dividing Berlin instead of trying to take it over completely. The East Germans, I think, never approved of that. They wanted the whole city.

Q: Then in 1958 you came back to the Department and to your old home, INR. I think Hugh Cumming was the director at the time, or Roger Hilsman, or both of them.

MAUTNER: No, Roger didn't come in until the Kennedy administration. Cumming was in charge. I came in to work on East Germany. We actually had a staff on that subject; the only place in the Department that dealt with it since the GDR was not recognized by the US and therefore did not fall under the purview of German Affairs. I then moved from there into the broader Soviet foreign policy field.

Q: I see. You started off with East Germany and broadened eastward later.

MAUTNER: Yes. At the time of the Berlin Crisis in the summer of 1961, I was pulled back from leave. I had taken some time off to paint the kitchen and was in the middle of painting the cabinets when I got a telephone call saying I had to come back to take over the Soviet foreign policy side in INR because those handling it were being transferred to other jobs. So that was when I got involved in all the Quadripartite negotiations.

Q: I want to ask you whether the INR role changed at all when the administration changed from Eisenhower to Kennedy?

MAUTNER: There was a big change. First, Roger Hilsman; nothing he ever did was done without a lot of fanfare. He was a political appointee who was quite a bureaucratic operator. The first thing he did was to cut INR in half. It was still the big research outfit leftover from OSS, plus people who were dealing with more current problems. What he did was shed the many analysts who had been dealing with more basic research, biographical data and what they called the National Intelligence Studies, most of which were being funded by CIA as it was. He lopped off almost 300 people by moving those functions over to the Agency. That is where most of them transferred, or got out and went to other jobs.

Q: So they were lopped off from the Department and were put into CIA?

MAUTNER: Yes. The whole biographical operation, all of that was transferred over to CIA. That left INR operating with about 400 people. It became more current focused. We were dealing more with current activities, writing pieces on what the Soviets were up to with their negotiating positions, and sending the stuff directly to the Secretary of State.

Q: How did this dovetail with what the Office of Soviet Affairs was doing? Did you work closely with them or independently of them?

MAUTNER: All of the above. The European Bureau always resented having INR as a second-guessing department. They wanted exclusive jurisdiction. But by that time, they also needed access to the data and particularly to the intelligence information that came through INR, which didn't come through the desks. In those days, intelligence was still pretty well compartmentalized; you usually did not have access to it unless you could prove a “need to know.” So, you had this competition. We had good personal relationships with our working level counterparts on the Soviet desk and elsewhere, but at the higher level, assistant secretary level, of course, there was always competition.

Q: Who is going to tell the Secretary?

MAUTNER: Exactly. Who gets there first. But nobody got in the way of Roger Hilsman. So, in this sense INR had much more of an entree than it had before. And the pre-war/ immediate post-war generation mainliners were dying out. Remember this was also the time the Department was phasing out all of those permanent civil service officers who had been attached to the geographic bureaus—the ones who were resented by the Foreign Service because they had too much influence. So, the institutional memories that the bureaus had before were gone.

Q: And sadly missed in some cases.

MAUTNER: Very, very definitely. INR could fill that gap, but at the same time it was a foreign body to the regular establishment. But as that older generation died off, more and more of the Foreign Service officers began to accept INR as a fact of life. A lot of them had assignments there and discovered it was rather interesting and did not hurt their careers. Once they discovered it didn't hurt their careers, then you are accepted.

Q: Now you were there during three of the great crises of the 20th century. The Berlin Wall, the Bay of Pigs Operation and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Could you say a few words first about the Berlin Wall and what role INR played in following that.

MAUTNER: Well, INR, of course, was the conduit for all the intelligence information...

Q: Did INR, by the way, have any indications ahead of time that something like this was coming or possible?

MAUTNER: We had lots of indications that something was coming. Nobody really expected an attempt, to quote Ulbricht, “to put a Chinese wall down the center of the city.” He said that two months before the Wall went up. He, after all, wanted the whole city.

We had information of building materials being stockpiled in East Berlin six months or a year before, but it coincided with a big campaign for rebuilding the city. Nobody had immediate intelligence of what was going to happen, because the whole thing was held very, very closely by the top echelon of the East German hierarchy. One thing I would like to point out is that nobody, and that includes the German government and every other government, ever really penetrated the top hierarchy of the East German regime. A lot of people thought they had contacts there, but I have yet to discover anybody who had a real inside link. Only the Soviets knew what Ulbricht and the others were up to, and even they, I am sure, didn't know everything. But, the West Germans never penetrated that system. They were caught totally by surprise when the Wall came down too. Their access evidently never gave them any sense of how weak the regime had become.

Q: Unfortunately, the opposite was not true, the East Germans had penetrated the West Germans.

MAUTNER: They had penetrated everything and had pretty good reading of the West German scene, but of course the ones at the top who were making the decisions, had a sort of warped mentality. That is the other thing you must keep in mind. The old communists, whether in the Soviet Union or in Eastern Europe, saw things with certain blinders.

Q: Now you were a member of the Berlin Task Force which followed the Wall. Will you say something about that, its composition, how it operated, etc.?

MAUTNER: Well, if one wants to be cynical, the task force was one of those vehicles that got a lot of publicity for being the coordinating center for all government agencies involved in a particular crisis.

Q: You say coordinating. Was it an advisory or decision making body?

MAUTNER: Well, allegedly it was suppose to be the coordinating body that brought together all opinions and distilled the stuff. That is the theory. In practice, it turned out after the first experiment that they served—if you want to be really cynical about it—to create a place where everybody from all the various agencies could let off steam. There was an exchange of information, but the decision making was elsewhere, in the White House particularly, and the task force was more or less excluded from it, but got the publicity.

Q: And in the White House who was it?

MAUTNER: Basically the very tight circle around Kennedy and, I will say this, those people didn't know very much about the essentials of the problem. There was an arrogance at that level, a refusal to listen to anybody except their circle of friends—that kind of thing.

Q: No German experience.

MAUTNER: No German experience and a lot of anti-German prejudice and unwillingness to deal with anyone except people they knew. They knew the big gurus from the Soviet field such as Kennan, Bohlen, and Thompson, none of whom had had grassroots experience in post-war Germany. So decision making was based on a limited amount of feel. The task force could provide the information and create pressure, especially institutional pressure which is very useful when filtered up from below. A lot of people of the old Berlin Mafia used that tactic to develop public pressure and institutional pressure

to push things. For instance, the appointment of General Clay who was sent over to Berlin was very much a result of the people like Maggie Higgins and Jimmy O'Donnell on the journalist side putting pressure on the Kennedys, pointing out that it would be politically disastrous if they didn't do something dramatic. It was not something that they really wanted to do.

Q: Who ran the Task Force? Technically, I believe, Secretary Rusk was in charge.

MAUTNER: Well, he never attended any of the sessions of the Task Force. Foy Kohler, who was the EUR Bureau chief, and Martin Hillenbrand generally chaired the sessions and delegated assignments. But what happened after a discussion, the Task Force never found out about because the chairmen then went off to the White House. How much they conveyed of Task Force views there, we never knew. Besides, I don't think they were in the inner loop at the White House.

Q: Within the Task Force itself, who carried the greatest weight? The diplomats in the State Department or the military?

MAUTNER: It depended on the issue. Paul Nitze was on the Task Force, the Secretary of the Navy. The Joint Chiefs had their representative and took very serious notes on everything. (Oddly enough, I got the job of briefing the Task Force every day on all pertinent current intelligence data. It was a five-minute briefing at the start of every meeting. And I did this free-lancing. Nobody in INR paid any attention. Hal Sonnenfeldt would sit in, but that was all.) And then there were people from the Operations Center and from various agencies like the CIA, FBI, Treasury. It allowed for a catharsis; you could get things off your chest and you could raise issues. When Clay came to one of the sessions just before he left for Berlin, the question of Steinstuecken came up.

Q: You might mention Steinstuecken. We didn't talk about that.

MAUTNER: One doesn't often. Steinstuecken was a little area located outside of Berlin proper which was still technically part of the city and the Russians and East Germans were always trying to cut off access to it and absorb it into East Germany, East Berlin.

Q: They never quite succeeded.

MAUTNER: They never succeeded. That issue, after the Wall came up, became a hot potato, and at the Task Force Clay raised the question of how could he get out there and show the flag, or do something. When the military argued he couldn't get there because he would not be allowed access, we on the State side piped up that there was always a helicopter. And that is exactly what Clay used when he went to Steinstuecken, showed the flag and registered the desired effect.

Q: How long did the Task Force continue?

MAUTNER: It probably was still in existence when the Wall came down in 1989. We had a regular roster updated every year with people who could be called on in case anything happened. Daily meetings stopped roughly about a year after the Wall went up; we then met on a weekly or monthly basis. Later it would be convened only in the event of a crisis over air traffic or autobahn problems and such.

Q: Well, those were exciting days. Did the trouble with the Soviets over the missile crisis have any effect on you or not?

MAUTNER: Well, we in INR were again the intelligence coordinators on this. There was all the reconnaissance traffic spotting where the ships and missiles were going, what kind of missiles were involved and what the satellite photography showed, anything picked up from the interception of Soviet communications, etc. We were up to our neck in that one, including the reporting that was going on in the Warsaw Pact at the time. Again, rather

interestingly, there were a lot of stories we got about the Soviets rolling out petroleum Pol lines in East Germany in anticipation of activity there at the time of the crisis.

Q: Activity around Berlin?

MAUTNER: Yes, around Berlin and East Germany. Those of us who were familiar with the German scene were always convinced that the Cuban missile crisis had very little to do with Cuba per se. We saw it as a Khrushchev ploy to create a military equation which would allow him to put pressure on us to force negotiations on Berlin. It didn't quite turn out that way, but the Soviets were intending to exploit it in that context because when they once got those missiles installed, they would have leverage against us. The idea that they would attack the United States directly to save Cuba was absurd; rather the basic objective was to get movement on the German/Berlin question. Places closer to home mattered to them much more.

One of the things that INR also did involved those conversations at the White House with Gromyko and Mikoyan and other Soviets who came over here. Martin Hillenbrand was the note taker for most of those sessions and he would allow me to take a look at his notes after each and then I would write up an analysis of Soviet intentions, what they were trying to do and where things were heading. We always had a number of arguments on these, because it was very hard to convince him that Berlin was important in this context. The White House was even more skeptical. Only later did it begin to register.

Q: There is a lot more to be written on that.

MAUTNER: Oh much is being written on the subject.

Q: Then in 1963 you went with your husband to the Sudan where you worked for Ambassador Rountree in Khartoum.

MAUTNER: Well, Karl worked for Ambassador Rountree. Ambassador Rountree did not want a husband and wife team on his staff. That was before the days of enlightenment in the Foreign Service, so I got a job with the African-American Institute in Khartoum.

Q: Oh, please, tell us about that.

MAUTNER: That is a non-governmental organization based in Africa which arranges to bring African officials to the United States for training or sponsors exchange programs. So, that turned out to be quite a useful experience because I helped with a lot of educational exchanges of Sudanese officials in various technical fields and developed a lot of contacts throughout the academic and technical worlds there. When the 1964 revolt broke out, it was against the military government and started with a riot at the university where a student was killed when the troops intervened. The repercussions led to the overthrow of the government and eventually to the Nimeiri regime, basically a communist-oriented regime. But at first the civilian government was a much more academically run, liberal type of reformist affair, and staffed with many of the people I had been dealing with.

So there was somehow a bit of schaudenfreude on my part. After the revolution, all the people who the ambassador had not allowed us to deal with officially, were the ones I was dealing with outside the embassy. So Karl and I were the ones to introduce them all to the ambassador.

Q: There were attacks on the embassy at that time.

MAUTNER: Oh, yes, there were repeated riots. A lot of it had little to do with the political revolution, it was racial. On top of the overthrow of the military government and installation of the new one, there was considerable loss of state control and the racial tensions blew up. In the fall of 1964, you had an episode in which one of the cabinet members who was a southerner...

Q: Which means a black man.

MAUTNER: Well, everybody was more or less the same color, but there was quite a racial difference between the Arab blacks and the Niloric blacks of the South Sudan. There was usually a token southerner in the cabinet. This minister was coming to Khartoum reportedly on a special mission and his plane was delayed. A crowd of southerners—there were thousands in Khartoum—went out to the airport to meet him and he didn't show up and he didn't show up and didn't show up. There was drinking and the rumor spread that something had been done to him and the crowd went on a rampage. They started to march back into the city smashing everything on the way. We were just coming home from church with all of the kids in the car, when we ran into this mob. They threw rocks through the car windows. We pushed the kids to the floor and drove straight through and got out of it. They weren't attacking us directly. They were just going after everything encountered.

Q: You just happened to have been there.

MAUTNER: We just happened to have been there. Several other Americans were pretty badly injured accidentally.

Then when the mob got downtown, the real fighting started. The Arabs took off after the southerners, and foreign targets were hit in the process. They went after the Protestant missions because the foreigners sheltered southerners. And a lot of Americans who lived in the vicinity had to take the missionaries in as refugees. Then the Arabs started massacring people, chasing them out into the desert in Jeeps and shooting them down. It was announced later just forty people had been killed, but those forty were Arabs who had been killed in the fracas. About 400 bodies of blacks were dumped in the Nile and floated down the river. It was a pretty bloody affair. The Christian churches were badly hit because of their services for the southerners.

Q: Were many missionaries down there?

MAUTNER: Yes, Catholic and other denominations. A lot of their parishioners simply disappeared and never showed up again. It was a very tense time because it was a totally irrational outburst.

Q: Where did the funding come from for the African-American Institute?

MAUTNER: I guess a lot of it came from American sources, but frankly I have no idea who supplied it. It still operates and a lot of it is private funding.

Q: Well, our relations with the Sudan these days are not very warm to put it mildly.

MAUTNER: They will turn around again eventually. But we stupidly poured much too much money into that place to make it a showcase of development aid, which was sort of silly, because you don't turn around 500 years of history with a quick injection of $13 billion.

Q: Were your relations close with the embassy and your job? Usually an embassy has a USIA person doing cultural affairs. Did you work with them?

MAUTNER: Oh, yes, we worked very closely. USIA would send a representative to sit on the board which was vetting candidates. I am still very good friends with the cultural attach#, an excellent chap. USIA worked with the program and the AID people did as well. It was a very close knit colony because it was such a small one in such a foreign environment. Khartoum has to be experienced to be believed. There were no outside resources like television. The nearest city was about 800 miles away. There is no place to go, no restaurants unless you had your Maalox with you. A lot of Americans went stir crazy unless they were really motivated to get involved. But on the other hand, if you got involved it was quite fascinating what you could learn.

Q: You referred to the fighting and unrest there. Did that limit your candidates for scholarship?

MAUTNER: It didn't at the time we were there. They were all in the processing mill at that time, getting out. But later, of course, a big gap developed, bureaucratic difficulties. But as long as somebody else was paying for it, particularly if the universities were sponsoring somebody, there was little trouble.

Q: Did your candidates come to you or did you have to search them out?

MAUTNER: They were referred to us basically by groups, such as the university, a government ministry, a social organization.

Q: From what you said I presume that you couldn't foresee at that time the drift leftward in Sudanese policies?

MAUTNER: Well, the military government had been in control for almost ten years and was sort of ossified within its own circle. The impact of independence, the growth of the universities and the spread of information was obviously having its effect. You could hear this when talking to anybody from the universities. There was an awful lot of foreign influence as well, because foreign professors were teaching in all of these schools, a number of anthropologists and social scientists floating around the place.

Q: Was the Soviet embassy active there?

MAUTNER: Oh yes, very competitive and the other embassies were competing with them as well. The British very deliberately issued invitations for a great affair to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the onset of World War II in 1939 to tweak the Soviets who had been allied with Hitler then. That kind of competitive stuff. The East Germans and the Chinese were even more active. The East Germans were always trying to get official recognition; they only had a trade mission there in Khartoum. But they had a residence right next door to one of the official Americans and, after the revolution, the government put a protective guard house in front of all American residences. The East Germans would move the guard's chair closer and closer to their house so it looked like they were being officially

guarded. The Chinese had Zhou En-lai pay a state visit. They and the Yugoslavs played the third world theme. This was the time of the non-aligned movement.

Q: How strong were the local communists, or were there many of them?

MAUTNER: Oh, there was a very strong local communist party. After the revolution they came out of the woodwork very quickly. A lot of them were old timers, members of the international apparatus for years, and they were very well organized. They also had a lot of young recruits among the intellectuals. So, they penetrated the government very quickly, and particularly the media. In fact, one or two of them are still around in influential positions in the Middle East. Until the Soviet party collapsed, you would always see the head of the Sudanese communist party at any big Comintern gathering or party congress in Moscow.

But in Sudan there was a big massacre of communists some years after we left, during one of the subsequent upheavals. The government decided to get rid of this problem and executed a number of communists. The Russians made a big fuss about that.

Q: Were you able to travel around the Sudan at all or get out of Khartoum?

MAUTNER: I make a couple of trips. Karl made far more because he could make them on official business. He was out in the west at Darfur, and when we went down to Uganda for a vacation, he stayed in Juba for a few days on the way back. I made the trip to Ethiopia, Asmara, where the Americans had a military hospital, and then up north to Wadi Halfa which was in the process of going under water because of the Aswan Dam. We drove from there to Abu Simbel in Egypt. The water had just gotten to the front door of the temple. You could still go inside and see the whole thing. That was just before it was all dismantled and raised. But just driving up through that countryside made one realize how desolate the area was. The German ambassador had a couple of Land Rovers and was a great one for going out on day-long expeditions. We would drive up to the second cataract on the Nile with him and stay there the whole day. Not very far from Khartoum, about a two

hours drive was a wadi, a dry river bed where you could find stone axes 200,000 years old. Evidently this was a cradle of civilization at one time. Traveling north on the railroad you could see evidence that the desert had once been a great grassland. There would be petrified trunks of trees. But nothing but desert now.

Q: That is sad.

MAUTNER: Yes, sad, but a fascinating country.

Q: Now, after that experience you came back to the Department and spent the next 28 years at INR.

MAUTNER: Exactly. They welcomed me back with open arms.

Q: You served under, as I count them, nine directors, of whom about three were professional, I think. So you had a bird's eye view of some very interesting things going on. What were the jobs you held in those 28 years?

MAUTNER: When I first came back in 1966 I was in the Soviet foreign political office —Hal Sonnenfeldt was then in charge—doing general Soviet foreign policy, including their involvement in atomic diplomacy. Then we had the Arab-Israeli war, the Six Day War, break on us and I was doing intra-departmental coordinating on that one, as well as intelligence analysis. INR was then right up there in the Department front lines because we could get the information long before anybody else. That was a day and night operation: following Soviet activities and tracking where they were getting involved and where they weren't getting involved, and trying to keep it all on an even keel. That meant stressing that neither the Soviets nor the Egyptians had intended ever to start a war. They were merely trying to pull a fast one by threatening the Straits of Tiran and expected the UN to pull them out before any shooting started.

Q: Which they unhelpfully did not apparently.

MAUTNER: Well the UN tried to, except the Israelis preempted.

After that I took over a number of individual portfolios in the foreign political section: African affairs, the Middle East portfolio, and then I took over the German one as well. So I handled all three of those areas simultaneously.

Q: Not entirely related to each other.

MAUTNER: Not entirely related, but sometimes as I look at the volume of stuff I wrote at that time on subjects ranging anywhere from Soviet penetration in Guinea to their pullback after the 1973 war in the Middle East to the German negotiations or Soviet foreign policy somewhere else, all of these at the same time, I am always amazed at myself.

That lasted a long time until I took over the whole Soviet foreign policy division per se. I had that for about five years and then moved on to be deputy director of the whole Soviet and East European Office.

Q: Of these nine directors under whom you served, which one was the most engaged in INR?

MAUTNER: Actually I guess Ray Cline was the most actively engaged in the sense that he was an intelligence professional. The trouble was he was totally upstaged by the Kissinger operation. This makes it rather interesting because Hal Sonnenfeldt had been head of the INR Soviet and East European office. Kissinger took him over to the White House when he set up shop. Hal knew what he had in the way of assets in INR and he used them, and so did Kissinger, at the working level, sometimes bypassing the director of INR.

Q: There were several layers in all of this.

MAUTNER: There were several layers in all of this. It got to be very complicated. The director did most of his work in the intelligence community operational ambiance. He was

not so directly involved in the nitty gritty analytical work which we were doing. Besides, INR was dependent for a good deal of its funding on the intelligence community budget which CIA controlled. That meant a constant turf fight in the community. Yet each director also knew the value of getting firstest with the mostest as far as finished analysis was concerned and so promoted our product wherever it would do the most good. All of the various directors did that.

Q: Which of the directors did you find was the most effective in his job?

MAUTNER: We had better name some names now. There were nine of them and they all begin to merge.

Q: Tom Hughes.

MAUTNER: Tom Hughes was a political operator who came in from the Humphrey campaign. He was well connected politically. He was a very good manager for INR because he knew everybody and pushed it all. He had no personal agenda of his own and knew how to maneuver in the intelligence community as well so, in that sense, as a manager of the place, he was one of the more effective ones.

Q: Then came Ray Cline.

MAUTNER: Well, Ray Cline wanted to match CIA. Where he did much good in promoting INR, he also did some damage. For instance, he reorganized. All of the geographic offices had an economic section attached to it. He wanted to have an economic bureau to match CIA for economic analysis so he removed all of those individual sections and established a new economic office. In ten years time there was a good economic outfit, but for eight of those ten years you didn't have the kind of economics input at the working level which would have been useful. So you just have to balance it off.

Q: And then came Bill Hyland.

MAUTNER: Bill Hyland, of course, was Kissinger's right-hand man when Kissinger came to the State Department. So INR became Kissinger's research staff basically. Hyland ran the operation exactly on that basis. We were right in the front line. There was no question about it, you were working for the Secretary. He might thumb his nose at you or make derogatory comments, yet you knew he read every piece of paper you sent and made notes in the margins. Satisfying, if not always comfortable.

Q: Then came Hal Saunders.

MAUTNER: Hal Saunders was Middle East-focused. That was his baby. He was a very nice individual to deal with. He allowed all the other offices to operate more or less autonomously. He also came from an intelligence community background. With his Middle East focus, you didn't have this immediate sense you had with Hyland that you were into everything up to your neck because the boss wanted it.

Q: Then came the first of the professionals, Bill Bowdler, an FSO.

MAUTNER: Well, Bill Bowdler didn't last very long. He was put there, I suspect, because they couldn't put him anywhere else at the time. Then there was a big flap over some internal political issue unrelated to INR and he left very suddenly. He never left much of a mark.

Q: He was followed by another FSO, Ron Spiers.

MAUTNER: Ron Spiers was a professional who knew what he wanted and knew how to get it. He let the various offices operate pretty much on their own. By that time, INR was becoming an institutional presence in the State Department, no longer the stepchild, and there was pressure to make it an assistant secretaryship, which meant it was fair game for the Foreign Service professionals and could be used as a base of empire. Personally,

I always thought that was a mistake because ideally intelligence research should be divorced from that kind of bureaucratic politics. But so is life.

Q: Then you received somebody who was an intelligence specialist, Hugh Montgomery.

MAUTNER: Hugh, whom I had known in Berlin and with whom I had a very good working relationship, knew how to play the intelligence game. His wife worked at the White House which was also very useful as far as contacts were concerned. So in the early years of the Reagan administration, INR could more or less write its own ticket. But, again, that was operating at an entirely different level than mine. The working staff operated as before and Hugh would support you if he knew your judgment was good.

Q: He was followed by another FSO, Mort Abramowitz.

MAUTNER: Mort and I had known each other on and off way back. So it was a professionally established relationship from the beginning. Mort, however, was a Foreign Service officer of rather distinct cast. The Secretary used him extensively as a trouble shooter. He would be dashing off dealing with various crises rather than...

Q: Excuse me, the Secretary would have been Shultz?

MAUTNER: Yes, it was Shultz. Mort had a close relationship with him and was always dashing off dealing with various crises rather than paying much attention to INR. He brought several individuals into deputy positions who to my way of thinking were disasters for the organization. They were those bright young types who wanted to change everything for the sake of change, with no concept of continuity and structure, etc. They reorganized everything to a fare-thee-well, constantly changing formats, what was being done, killing off programs, interfering with doing this, that and the other thing, and riding roughshod over people who had provided loyal service for years. Morale, of course, just plummeted.

Now, Mort didn't pay much attention to this. I don't say that anybody interfered with our analytical products per se but these deputies often would try to change conclusions or emphasis. I suspect they were infected by the atmosphere out at the Agency where Casey was trying so hard to make intelligence more policy orientated; that the conclusions he approved often did not agree with the text of an estimate.

While these fellows didn't do it on the same scale, they had their own opinion of what was right. You couldn't tell them that they didn't know what they were talking about.

Q: That violates everything that INR stands for.

MAUTNER: Exactly. While they would insist they knew better because they knew what was going on at the top, those of us down the line felt differently. I am talking to you about it from my perspective on the subject. I think they did a lot of damage that took years to shake through the system.

Q: Now, Abramowitz was followed by the present director, Toby Gati.

MAUTNER: No, Doug Mulholland came before Toby - a professional who was brought over from CIA, who had been the head of economic intelligence at the Treasury Department under Baker. He was a very low key type, very nice individual. I don't think he ever had the clout that some of the earlier directors had in the sense that he wasn't the kind to use his elbows in bureaucratic in-fighting.

Toby Gati came in with the new Clinton administration and I retired shortly thereafter. She came from the United Nations organization. The first time we ever had a woman as director of INR. She is somebody who is very forceful and knows what she wants and knows how to get it.

Q: What were your relations with the bureaus? Were they good?

MAUTNER: Oh, my relations with the bureaus were always good. I had known many of these people for years. In fact, throughout, most of the staff of INR's Soviet and East European office, I knew all these people from the time they first started in the field. At first there was a great deal of continuity in the Soviet field with people coming back repeatedly. So there was a very close working relationship. In many cases, although not in recent years, but it happened until 1979-80, we would have clashes with the EUR bureau level, particularly over Berlin where some felt they could work out deals with Soviets over things like the air corridor, etc. We kept telling them they had to be much more forceful on the subject. There were times when they even tried to kill papers that we wrote, but they weren't successful.

Q: What were your relations with the CIA and the Defense Department?

MAUTNER: We had much more to do with CIA than with Defense. Although we saw Defense regularly when preparing estimates or when interagency coordination on something was required. But the close work in terms of daily telephone calls was usually to your analytical counterparts in the Agency.

Q: Were you in general agreement with their deductions?

MAUTNER: On our side, the political side, very much so. In fact, they would often defer to our judgments because most of us had been in the field longer than they had. CIA went through a great transition during the Casey/Gates years; all of the old timers were moved out and new bright young people were brought in who didn't know the background.

For instance, somewhere in the mid '80s, I got a call from one of the people out there that they were sending over a new young analyst who was assigned to go through all of the Berlin Air documentation we had. We were having some pressure from the Soviets on the air corridors at that particular time. Anyhow this chap came over and told me gravely, politely, that he had been through all of the computer data since 1975 on this air

access business and wondered if there is anything else he should know. I asked him if he was aware of the 1945 air agreement and negotiations between 1945 and 1975. Well, he hadn't heard of that. It turned out that all of the CIA's Berlin files were on paper until about the early '70s and then computerization began. Apparently nothing exists before computerization for the new analysts. It was the kind of sweet, though, how impressed these kids are by elders who remembered things that happened before their parents were born. As a result, they were quite deferential and would agree with us on most political issues.

On the other hand, if you got into a technical issue, in the hardware department and things like that, then the disputes were quite different and occasionally bloody because everybody was arguing for money. So, it varied depending on the various offices.

Q: Does INR give advice or only facts, or does it do both?

MAUTNER: Technically speaking INR provides facts and analysis. Kissinger started insisting that one should give options, 1, 2, and 3. Other people wanted options so you could stack the deck. Basically speaking, our role was not to provide advice. It was to show the consequences of various courses of action. The idea was to present an objective picture. Now, my objective picture of what was happening in Berlin might be different from the objective picture somebody else would have on what is happening in Berlin; it depended on perspective. What reception your analysis got depended on your personal relationship with the recipient or what reputation you had.

Q: Do foreign embassies ever come to you in INR?

MAUTNER: Oh, yes. They came regularly and lots of them because they discovered they can learn more in INR than they could from the desk. We could provide the kind of background in depth that they could not get from the desk because the desk was dealing

primarily in day-to-day operational problems. So, there was a lot of that. And journalists also.

In the last few years, another new phenomenon occurred. The academic community discovered INR. Not only was it a place they all wanted to work, but with the release of a lot of the early documentation through Freedom of Information, they discovered in some of the INR products, material they couldn't get anywhere else.

Q: Which of the Secretaries of State, under whom you served these 28 years, made the best use of INR?

MAUTNER: The best is quite a relative term. The one who exploited it the most was Kissinger because he knew what the operation was and utilized it to the hilt. Now, whether it was the best or not depends on what you think. Oddly enough, Shultz and Baker used it very extensively. Baker never did so personally because he had the wagons circled around him up in his own office, but his advisors utilized it extensively. For instance, during the two-plus-four negotiations on Berlin after the Wall came down, the Quadripartite Group as well as the NSC staff, worked very closely with INR.

Q: It is rewarding to know that.

MAUTNER: Oh, yes, they drew it in. The geographic desks did their best to keep us out because they didn't like that kind of competition. But some of us had been involved for so long that they couldn't ignore us.

Q: Was it difficult to get Foreign Service officers to serve in INR?

MAUTNER: In the early days, very definitely. They all felt it was a dead-end and they would never get any credit for what they did. That began to change, particularly in the Kissinger era. Furthermore, those who had been in, particularly junior officers who were

just out of school, were enthralled with what they had access to on the job. They passed the word on.

Q: Some of the people who have served in INR have gone on to quite responsible positions in the Department.

MAUTNER: Yes, but it took time until the Department got used to it.

Q: You mentioned morale. I imagine that went up and down over those years.

MAUTNER: It did, depending on circumstances. It also depended on individual offices, some had problems that others didn't have. Basically speaking INR generally had pretty good morale because the staff members often felt they were standing together against the outside world. Now that they are being more thoroughly integrated into the State Department, I notice there is quite a different attitude.

Q: During those 48 years you lived through some of the great foreign policy issues of our day. Let me ask you a little about them. Were you involved in any way with the Vietnam negotiations at the end of the '60s, early '70s?

MAUTNER: Not with the negotiations directly, only with any role that the Soviets might be playing, any influence they might be having, and trying to track Soviet relationship with the Vietnamese.

Q: Tell us a little about that. Were the Soviet involved in any way? Did they have any influence on the Vietnamese or on their negotiating tactics?

MAUTNER: They had a certain amount of influence as one of the few allies that the Vietnamese had. And they were a counterweight for the Chinese who were next door. So the Vietnamese were very careful to maintain a good relationship with Moscow. But the Soviets had no intention of getting involved directly in something that immediately involved us. So their aid was all indirect. Periodically we would get press articles about

Soviet volunteers going out to fight with the Vietnamese, but nothing ever came of that. There were aid shipments, but the shipments all had to go through China and the Chinese were not very cooperative on a lot of these things, so the Russians were very cautious. But, my role in that one was very much a peripheral one, just keeping track of the Soviet role.

Q: There was the Berlin agreement of 1971. I presume you had some interest in that.

MAUTNER: We were up to our necks in that one. That was sort of a high point. However, my own viewpoint is that 1969 was one of the most seminal years in post-war European history. That was when everything sort of came together in the East-West conflict. The US-Soviet relationship had just recovered from the impact of the Czech invasion. You remember we were just going to begin SALT negotiations when the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia and everything was put on ice. Now we had a new presidency in the United States, a Kissinger in the White House, with a far deeper global grasp of issues than had been the case before. While there was pressure to settle the Vietnam issue, the opportunity for an opening with the Soviet Union had emerged because the USSR had finally achieved nuclear parity with the United States. Only after having achieved nuclear parity were the Soviets prepared to deal seriously on bilateral issues. A lot of the arms control people thought you could always get deals on technicalities with enough negotiating, but the Soviets never signed on unless they felt they were accepted as equals.

In 1969 you had the whole Berlin business beginning to jell. The Czech invasion had been a sobering moment for all of Eastern Europe, that was one thing. The possibility of conflict resulting from the unrest in the satellites was brought home very much to the Soviets. You had a situation in Germany where a country which had been frustrated for years was beginning to get back on its feet. The grand coalition formed in 1967 had brought the SPD into the government, with Willy Brandt as foreign minister. Brandt had a long history of dealing with the Soviets in Berlin, and of trying to develop a dialogue with them.

Change was in the atmosphere. The Polish church and the German Catholic church were beginning to talk to each other. A lot of East-West feelers were going back and forth. The Soviets had years earlier latched on to the idea of a European Security Conference as a way to bypass the absence of a peace treaty for World War II which would ratify their territorial gains. In 1966 there had been a Warsaw Pact meeting which set a European Security Conference as the goal of Pact policy and proposed the acceptance of both Germanies in the United Nations. At that 1966 meeting, the participants agreed that all the East European states could also begin developing direct contacts with West Germany. Before that they had to clear their moves through the East Germans. The East Germans didn't like this, but had no choice.

Well, the Romanians immediately jumped in with both feet as part of their campaign to establish an independent role in the bloc, and established full diplomatic relations with West Germany without consulting anybody. Whereupon the East Germans put pressure on the Soviets to get the whole Pact back in line again.

In 1967 the Pact had another meeting on the German question and decided to remove a lot of their earlier demands for western concessions. That was the first clear signal that they were getting serious about negotiating some type of East-West agreement.

Czechoslovakia put a stop on that for a couple of years. But in 1969, in February, the Bundesrat, the West German upper house, was to meet in West Berlin to vote on a new president. The Soviets had always objected to meetings of any of the German parliamentary offices in West Berlin and threatened access harassment this time. There was threatening air corridor activity and the beginnings of build up towards a crisis. West German parliamentarians trying to come to Berlin for this meeting were stopped. But suddenly, in early March, the so-called Ussuri incident occurred where the Chinese attacked across the Soviet border, and 20-30 people were killed. A week later the Soviets counterattacked and slaughtered a large number of Chinese.

Well, that combination of crisis in the West and crisis in the East was, I think, the catalyst for Moscow. When this Bundesrat election took place in West Berlin there wasn't a sign of tension. The Soviets called the East German leadership to Moscow, including the defense minister. They were all closeted in Moscow for a couple of weeks. Shortly thereafter you suddenly began getting feelers in all directions.

The Soviet leadership also called for a world communist conference in June and talk about peace in our time, East/West cooperation and peaceful coexistence proliferated.

Q: Now this was under Brezhnev?

MAUTNER: Yes, Brezhnev and his crowd. Right after that conference was over, the East German leadership was again called to Moscow for a special conference but Ulbricht was pointedly not included.

Q: He had led the German communists for years.

MAUTNER: Yes, and he had led the delegation to the communist conference the month before, but this time it was Honecker and Stoph who went with others from the Politburo. That right away was a signal that the screws were being put on the GDR.

A month before, NATO had met at Reykjavik and discussed sanctioning East-West negotiations on Berlin. NATO then sent Moscow an invitation for talk. Early in September, the Soviets accepted the proposal to discuss Berlin. The next month the Poles sent notice to the West Germans that they were prepared to begin negotiations on establishing relations. The Czechs and a couple of other East European countries followed suit. The East Germans held back until December but finally said they were prepared to negotiate with Bonn.

Q: There were a whole train of events.

MAUTNER: Yes, and the Allied Berlin negotiations were sort of the catalyst for bringing this together. In early January, Egon Bahr, Willy Brandt's aide, went to Moscow and after about three or four weeks of talks back and forth there, it was quite obvious that the Soviets were prepared to move and had agreed on a tentative settlement. They just had to work out the details. And so it got underway.

Brandt had become Federal chancellor in 1969 which also helped. The Soviets considered him a known quantity with whom they felt they could do business. So, it was then only a question of time before the Four Power negotiations on Berlin got underway.

Q: Where were the negotiations held?

MAUTNER: Mostly in Moscow and Berlin, back and forth. The actual Berlin negotiations were held at the Control Council building in West Berlin once we got to that stage of Four Power consultations. But in the meantime you could see evidence of East German attempts to block the whole thing. They pulled out all possible stops, using their agents East and West to try to stop movement.

But by mid-1970 Brandt and Brezhnev had agreed on the outline framework of a German-Soviet Treaty. With that accomplished, the Allies undertook to start negotiations on Berlin because the treaty could not stand without a Berlin agreement. So in August, 1970, Brandt and Brezhnev initialed the German treaty, at which point Four Power negotiations on Berlin got seriously underway.

In September, I wrote a long paper, of which I am still proud, going over all of the known negotiating positions, pointing out where the Soviets could give and how we might get agreement on each of these various issues, because Moscow obviously had decided to find ways to settle the whole thing. I got a couple of comments back from Berlin saying that they were not that optimistic, but in the end the issues were worked out as predicted. Actually the history of the Soviet-German talks spelled it out—what the Germans were

prepared to accept or not accept, and what the Soviets indicated they could or could not accept. Intelligence played a big role here because the information coming through that channel was invaluable in shaping our analysis of the whole process.

Anyhow, you could see all of this evolving inexorably from 1969 on. After the Allies got their quadripartite agreement, Brandt still had a big fight in the Bundestag to get the treaty ratified, and did it by only one or two votes. Because it was so tight, the Soviets were even more conciliatory to make sure he won and so Brandt got some extra Soviet concessions as a result.

Once those agreements were signed and ratified, that opened the door for Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary to establish relations. After that the East Germans finally came along reluctantly and signed on. That set the stage for what the Soviets had wanted all along which was a European Security Conference, which would legitimize the existing borders in Europe.

Q: Which we were reluctant...

MAUTNER: Oh, Kissinger was opposed; he was sure it would undermine our position in Europe. But those of us who were fans of the CSCE process felt there was no danger of that. What substance the CSCE would have would be what we wanted to put into it. In order to get what they wanted—the Ersatz Peace Treaty—the Soviets would be willing to accept many things. That was the genesis of those interlocking concepts, baskets 1, 2 and 3. We pointed out that while the Soviets had no intentions of observing the human rights principles, in basket 3, they would accept it to get the other baskets. But with all baskets locked together, they could not get the economic assistance they wanted (basket 2) unless the parliaments of other countries were willing to extend it, and that they wouldn't do if the Soviets were being nasty to their citizens, for instance. You tied this all together and the Soviets ended up with a CSCE which gave them nothing that in any way hurt the West.

They could say they had gotten a peace treaty for World War II, but it didn't change a darn thing. And gave us some leverage over Moscow's behavior.

Q: And it took President Ford to Helsinki to sign it.

MAUTNER: Yes, to sign the Helsinki Act. But as I said, the administration was very much worried about it. They were sure we were giving away the shop.

Q: I know, I was serving in Western Europe at the time and we received instructions to damp down enthusiasm for this.

MAUTNER: But, the Europeans understood it far better. They knew exactly what a weapon they had acquired. They knew it gave each of them leverage against both the Soviets and us. Each one could play his own game on this one and at the same time it was all to their advantage to stand together in doing it. It is going to take a long time before historians unravel just how this process worked itself out.

Q: Those treaties in 1971 on Berlin and Germany were seminal events for what followed later.

MAUTNER: Because they alleviated the tension. They allowed the beginning of a normalized East-West relationship, more and more contact, and that could only mean more Western influence in the East.

Q: Am I right in believing that after 1971, there were no more serious Soviet threats against Berlin?

MAUTNER: Not serious. There were pin pricks. There was often friction on the autobahn or over little issues; the East never gave up on these issues. As late as 1979-80 we were having trouble in the air corridors because they were trying to see how far they could restrict air space.

Q: Well, changing the subject rather radically, were you involved at all in the Arab-Israeli wars, 1967, 1973, etc.?

MAUTNER: I was involved in both of those. Very intimately involved in the 1967 war tracking the Soviet role and how far it went. Of course, the INR people dealing with the Arab side were dealing with entirely different matters. The real danger, as far as we on the Soviet side were concerned, was whether Moscow would get directly involved in the fighting.

Then in 1973 I was involved exactly the same way, trying to discover how far the Soviets had a hand in this effort. My own contention was that they did not, that in fact, they had believed nobody in his right mind would attack the Israelis. This, by the way, had been the Israeli view, too.

Q: Did you think this after the alert of the Soviet troops in 1973 when we were told the airborne division was ready to fly out?

MAUTNER: Well, that was after the war had started. Beforehand, everybody was convinced Sadat would be defeated if he attacked, and the Israelis were just as convinced as we were. At the time we were relying a good bit on Israeli intelligence which reported that even though the Arabs were mobilizing, it wasn't serious because they knew very well they were no match for the Israelis, which was quite right. Except, that wasn't the way Sadat thought. The only person who called it right down the line was actually Dave Mark, then deputy director of INR, who said that Sadat might start a war deliberately even if he were going to be defeated, for the political impact of being able to show the Israelis weren't invulnerable. Dave was very, very clever on that score. After the war started, our reading of Moscow's reaction was that if the Soviets thought the Egyptians were going to be overrun and the Israelis would march on Cairo, they wouldn't let Egypt go down the drain without taking some action. But, I don't think they ever expected to get directly involved militarily.

Q: Well, there were those tense hours when we went to Defcon 2 and nobody knew quite what was going to happen.

MAUTNER: Yes, I think that was slightly an overdone reaction on the part of the administration because of the emotional impact of this whole affair. One thing one shouldn't forget is that prior to the 1973 war, actually in 1970, the Israelis were making air strikes further and further inland in Egypt. In July a couple of Soviet planes stationed out there, went up during one of these attacks and the Israelis shot down two MiGs. That, I think, brought a moment of truth to the Soviets, that their commitment to Egypt had gotten so deep that they were likely to be in the firing lines if anything disastrous happened. They had no intentions of starting a war with Israel because they figured we would get involved in that case. At that time I remember writing a paper about the beginning of “retrenchment,” arguing that the Soviets would now begin to scale back on their commitment to Egyptian defense after that moment of truth. And, I think I was fairly right on that. They would not let an ally go down the drain easily, but on the other hand, they weren't prepared to fight the United States.

Q: I understand that Sadat did not tell the Soviets about his plan and that irritated them greatly too.

MAUTNER: Yes, that did. As I said, the Israelis were convinced there was nothing to worry about. They could handle it. And they were caught flatfooted. The 1973 war for them was an eye-opener. There had been nothing quite as arrogant as some of the Israeli military and intelligence officers after the 1967 war. You couldn't tell them anything after that victory.

Q: That was a high point in Israeli history in a sense.

MAUTNER: Yes, very much so. That is where your problem is today. To my own way of thinking, they had a big chance after the 1967 war to make a gesture to the Arabs and begin setting the switches slightly differently. But the atmosphere wouldn't allow that.

Q: We are coming up to more recent events, and particularly the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and the fall of the Soviet Union. I know you were deeply involved in those items too. Could you tell us something about the Berlin Wall incident? Had we had any indications that there was going to be any movement in that direction?

MAUTNER: To answer in one way, there were no advance indications that the Wall was going to come down. On the other hand, you had had weeks, years of grassroots protest actions inside East Germany, particularly down in the Leipzig and Dresden areas. It centered first around the churches and then built up beyond that to public protests about government policies. The more they demonstrated and the less violently the government reacted, the more they protested. Inside the government itself, uneasiness was growing. But what none of us appreciated was how weak the internal structure of the regime had become and how detached the East German leadership was from day to day reality. As I mentioned earlier, no outsiders really had any access to the top leadership of East Germany. Not the West Germans or anybody else.

What the leadership did was just lose its nerve at the last minute. There was no intention of taking down the Wall. The East German official whom journalists were badgering for comments on a proposal to allow more movement between East and West Berlin, suddenly threw up his hands and refused to say anything one way or another. Whereupon the crowd around him just surged through the checkpoint. The Wall came down because the regime didn't have the type of cold-blooded ruthlessness of its predecessors to stop it. It is just a loss of nerve. It is the same thing that happened in Moscow when the Soviet Union fell apart. The new leadership was not like the old ones who never took challenges lightly and fought back ruthlessly.

Q: Could we say that Gorbachev caved in in the Soviet Union?

MAUTNER: Well, after that coup, when he suddenly found himself vulnerable, he tried, for instance, in Lithuania, to reestablish his authority. He apparently sanctioned the KGB's use of force there, but didn't like the idea of being guilty of bloodshed. They are somewhat squeamish about bloodshed, this generation, softer than their predecessors.

Even before the 1991 coup, Gorbachev had been pushing for some kind of modus vivendi with the outside world in order to give the Soviet Union time to recover from its economic malaise and also get itself on an even keel. Actually he was brought into office in 1985 to oversee the reform of the ossified Soviet system into something more viable.

Q: But to continue as a communist state.

MAUTNER: Yes, but to reform it so that it could deal more effectively with the outside world. The Soviet Union was falling further and further behind in the technological race. He was brought in specifically for that job. All of the people in the Politburo wanted it. They wanted to see change but within a strictly controlled, communist framework. Gorbachev sent out signals everywhere. He informed the communist world that it could no longer count on the Soviet Union to back up local parties. They had to succeed on their own. When he went to East Germany in 1989, he told Honecker that he had to settle his own problems himself. The Soviet Union was not going to stand behind him and back him up. He did the same with the other parties as well. The idea was that the Soviet Union would concentrate on its own affairs and, while the rest of the communist world might count on it for economic assistance and military security, domestic problems would have to be dealt with locally. So you created an atmosphere where traditional controls were loosened. Outside influences quickly spread. People could travel abroad. Soviet citizens were running all over Europe on vacation, to Majorca and elsewhere. Underground intellectual ferment that had been around for years, suddenly bubbled up to the surface.

Q: A real glasnost.

MAUTNER: Yes, a real glasnost. People were exposed through television to outside information of all kinds. They began to see via television comparisons in living standards. They could begin to compare the way they were living with the way people lived elsewhere. Then, part of the deal with the West Germans involved troop withdrawals, lowering the level of Soviet military representation in Eastern Germany. In return the East Germans would be given economic assistance.

In the Soviet Union, the old guard leadership soon got worried that things were moving too fast and getting out of control. The final straw for them was Gorbachev's plan to sign a treaty with the other constituent republics of the USSR, giving them a certain amount of autonomy within a commonwealth-type of arrangement. That was when they decided to strike, and stage this coup. I think a lot of them believed Gorbachev eventually would go along with them when he realized how dangerous the situation had become. But he didn't. Yet when he got back to Moscow, he found Boris Yeltsin leading the masses, and he, Gorbachev, shoved to the sidelines. He was not the kind of in-fighter that Stalin or those other Bolsheviks were, who would walk over bodies to get where they were going. He was trying to act democratically, and in the Soviet system you don't do it quite democratically when the going gets tough.

Q: Once an avalanche starts it is hard to stop it.

MAUTNER: Exactly. So you have to give Gorbachev credit for at least starting the process, but he lost control. Now, what you see is a kind of tumultuous developing of democracy from the grassroots up, regardless of, or in spite of, the government, a very unsettling process for everybody because all structures and institutions are thrown into question.

Q: Unprecedented in Russia.

MAUTNER: This is the real revolution, one that Russia never had before. Because what it has done is give power to people, and I mean that literally. Now individuals matter. They can, say, “do things,” affect the course of events. Perhaps not the way it is done in other countries, but still unbelievably compared with the past. Past revolutions in Russia have always been from the top down, changing the form in which government functioned, but never changing the fundamental relation between rulers and ruled. That is changing now. Russia is the product of 800 years of political and cultural evolution, and it is going to take maybe a hundred years to shake out this revolution.

Q: Did we foresee the break up of the Soviet Union into newly independent countries?

MAUTNER: No, nobody expected it, no more than Gorbachev did. We expected they would be able to find some kind of a commonwealth-type of arrangement where things could be restructured peacefully, guided from the top. We were prepared to push for the Baltic States getting out, but not the others.

Q: Yes, they were in a little different category.

MAUTNER: None of what in the Department is called the “stan area” states (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, etc.) wanted to leave the Soviet Union at first. But then the local communist leaders realized this was a way they could run their own show, without listening to anybody else. Still most of them were reluctant to lose the economic ties and political infrastructure on which they were dependent. So a lot of them, those in central Asia in particular, were not at all enthusiastic about marching out the door. The Ukraine was something else, as were the Caucasus states.

Q: Can you see any of those joining up with Russia again?

MAUTNER: Oh, yes, but not in the old way. Before, they were all part of an empire of conquered states. Most of the “stan” countries will want to maintain very close economic ties with Russia. But it is interesting that in most of these states, the old communist parties

that the Soviets installed are still running the country, albeit now dressed in local costumes and publicly practicing the Muslim religion, etc. These are politicians who have learned to get along under any system.

Q: Every country has its survivors.

MAUTNER: Yes. Well, these people have been overrun before in their history and they survived. You bend and go on. But a lot of them will maintain very close ties with Russia. Some of them are dependent on the Russian military for security purposes. Tajikistan is a case in point because it cannot defend itself against foreign incursions. You can make a good case that defending the Tajikistan/Afghan border is a legitimate security concern for Moscow. So that has to be taken into account. On the other hand, the Ukraine, for instance, will not give up its independence lightly. Belarus is different. It never really had much of a sense of separate identity and so the trend now is to return to closer ties with Moscow, although the Russians don't want to incorporate Belarus because it would be an economic burden. The country is in economic ruin and has little infrastructure.

Q: And presumably the Poles would not welcome this either.

MAUTNER: They might not welcome it, but on the other hand they would like to see Belarus get on its own feet. But, again, the trend there is closer and closer to Russia. But none of this is going to happen with a breathtaking, disruptive effect on European security. It will be a slow process.

You saw what happened in the Caucasus. The Russians initially backed the Abkhazians against the Georgians because they knew it would unsettle the Georgians. Now the Russians are having second thoughts and are ditching the Abkhazians because Georgia is more important and they want stability there.

Q: Well, you certainly have hit upon some very important topics. Were there some other substantive issues that we should discuss, that you would like to say anything about during

those years? We have only touched lightly upon a few of the most important ones, but I know in 28 years you covered many, many fields.

MAUTNER: I don't know, it has always been one thing after another and they are all fascinating.

Q: I want to talk about another aspect of your career, which we haven't touched on yet. And that is your role as the traveling speaker for the Department during which you covered, I don't know how many, areas of the country but I think probably most of the states and Alaska, explaining our policies. Tell us a little about that. How you got into it and how extensively you traveled and whom you met.

MAUTNER: Well, I think that was one of the more fascinating and satisfying aspects of my whole career. People out there liked you and seemed impressed by somebody coming from the Department to speak. They are all so nice to you and make you feel as if you are important, which you never felt when you were back in Washington.

I got involved in it, I would say, towards the end of the '60s when the Department gradually came to the realization that they had to do something about women.

Then the Public Affairs Bureau staffing was 90 percent women who had been there for a long time. If they got good reactions and good vibes from an audience, they would send you out again. I had the advantage of coming from the INR background which meant that I didn't have to discuss policy. The biggest problem with most of the Foreign Service officers who go out on speaking engagements is that they recite the policy line and try to defend it to an audience that really doesn't have a feel for what went into making the policy. I could take a different tack and provide the background and refuse to discuss whether the policy was right or wrong. I just tried to explain why it was the policy. This seemed to go over very big with audiences, because for the first time they could get a frank picture of why, for instance, the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan wasn't just an imperialist venture. It had a lot of other ramifications, the fact that the Soviets felt threatened: we were already involved

in Iran, talking rapid deployment force; we had built up our forces in the Middle East; and were emplacing new missiles in Europe at the same time. The Soviets were also worried about another Chinese hitting attack, this time on Vietnam. All of these things were going on in the background. Their going into Afghanistan was to support a leftist regime which they had helped establish, some of whose leaders wanted their assistance. They thought they could stabilize the situation very quickly, establish a new government and get out, thereby showing the world that they still counted and that the US shouldn't try anything on their frontier. When you explain it like that, people began seeing a different context than just simple imperialist expansionism. But you could do that with any issue, explaining the various ramifications and then your audience had a better understanding of why the government's policy was the way it was.

Q: In what subjects did you find the most interest?

MAUTNER: Basically whatever was in the last issue of Time magazine. Some audiences, of course, depending on the ethnic composition, would be more interested in a specific subject. But generally what I was asked to talk about most of the time was Soviet related. Anything I wanted to talk about dealing with the Soviet Union. And particularly after the Gorbachev era began. What was behind all this glasnost business and what they were trying to do with it? That went over big in all types of audiences. Whether it was talking to the Rotary in Iowa, or to the Council of Foreign Relations out in Seattle, or elsewhere. When they requested I be sent back for another event, that made a big impression in the Department. I kept getting calls to the point where one of my supervisors got provoked and tried to stop it. But, it was the best thing I ever did. Free trips everywhere. I got to see places in this country I never would have seen otherwise and met people I never would have. I made at least eight trips up to Alaska.

Q: Eight trips to Alaska?

MAUTNER: Yes, starting out on the SALT II debates, and then going for the World Affairs Council up there, and once it was to brief a group traveling up there. And Hawaii the same way. They have a very strong East-West program out there.

Q: How many states did you cover?

MAUTNER: I counted about six that I missed. The two Dakotas, Arkansas, Louisiana, South Carolina and Idaho. I was scheduled to go to Arkansas at the tail end of one, but it was called off at the last minute because the head of the Council there had forgotten to send out the invitations.

Q: Did you find your audiences varied in their interest and intelligence?

MAUTNER: They varied dramatically. Most people who would bother to come out for something like that were intelligent. They may not know much about the issue, but they wanted information. They were very responsive as long as they could ask questions and you were willing to answer them frankly. Only on one occasion did I ever run into any hostility and that was of all places at Fort Huachuca down in the depths of Arizona, where I was speaking on the SALT II negotiations. The military, of course, feel strongly about any arms deals with the Soviets. The talk nevertheless went over quite well. The audience agreed and disagreed on various points but there was no hostility until afterwards at the reception. An elderly lady, beautifully coiffed, came up to me and said, “May your soul be damned in Hell for eternity,” and walked away. I assume she didn't approve of arms control agreements. But other than that I never had any problems, with generals or anyone else.

Q: Did you find much disagreement with our policy? Did many people get up and say you were wrong or doing things wrong?

MAUTNER: They would often say we were doing things wrong, but Tom, have you ever been able to explain what a policy is?

Q: That is an unfair question.

MAUTNER: I have discovered that I never knew what the policy was on any issue. I mean we were either friendly with one country or not friendly with another, but what was the policy? The point is you dealt with the issues that you had to deal with. They might criticize you saying, “Why is the government doing something that seems so stupid?” but if you explained the factors that had to be considered in formulating a policy line, there was rarely a problem.

Q: But I gather it wasn't only groups that you spoke to, you were also on radio and television on many occasions.

MAUTNER: Oh yes. And also to the Air War College where I regularly spoke at their East-West seminars. I did some television and talk shows. Usually I went out to speak to a World Affairs Council and the local talk show would have you on afterwards. Sometimes you did the same talk show four or five times in a row and got to be quite friendly with people. They always enjoyed it. It filled a space.

Q: You didn't find much hostility then for the Department?

MAUTNER: No, in fact, I would often get the reaction, “Well, having listened to you talk I have a much better feeling about the Department.” Regurgitating what policy is, 1, 2, and 3 doesn't work. It doesn't make much sense to people out there. What makes sense to them was insight into all the ramifications of a problem and all of the factors that must be taken into account. If it is an issue on the Middle East, it is not just whether you support Israel; it has to do with what you are doing about the Arabs as well; it has to do with the Soviets who might be involved; and it has to do with economic interests, including oil. But when you put this all together...

Q: Are you continuing any of this since you have retired?

MAUTNER: I have made a couple of talks since I have retired, but not many. Most audiences are interested in having somebody who is up to date on the latest, and that, of course, I no longer am, having to rely now on the newspapers for the latest information. Although, I must say the issues still look the same as when I left.

Q: Well, you retired about a year ago in 1994.

MAUTNER: No, in 1993, just two years now.

Q: Looking back on your long years, would you advise a young person to enter the Foreign Service today?

MAUTNER: Well, based on my experience, I am not a good example because the system doesn't work today the way it did when I entered. To go in expecting to start at the bottom and stay in for a whole career just isn't the pattern of professional behavior these days. People move around. I would say the best idea today is to develop a background in a certain geographic area and expertise in a specific practical field. One of the things I was advising the many students who were going into Soviet or Russian studies, was that Russian scholars are a dime a dozen; what is needed is somebody who is an oil expert who also understands the Russians. A prime example of that was in the late 1970s when you had that great oil study that CIA put out—how the Soviet oil industry would collapse in a few years. Well, the drafters were oil experts, well versed in the international field; they knew all the problems and extrapolated from their knowledge. CIA's Soviet experts who knew something about oil told them they were crazy because the Soviets don't operate by rational rules. And yet they were overruled because they were Soviet, not oil experts. That study stands. It was right in all of its facts, but the result was wrong. The Soviet oil industry has problems, but it's still there. You had to know both the Russian psychology and the technicalities.

Q: Say a word about the role of women in the Foreign Service then, when you came in and now, how it has changed, etc.

MAUTNER: Well, there weren't very many women at all in the Foreign Service when I came in nor did they last very long. As I said, after the war they began taking in a few on the assumption that they would marry Foreign Service officers and have to resign. In the occupation of Germany there were a number of women, technical specialists, the same in Japan and elsewhere. Those women were already established in their fields and paved the way for a lot of changes in the government later on. Since then it has just been a matter of slow and gradual expansion. It took the State Department longer than most places, because it always takes State longer than most places to make changes. One of the things that has come to the fore now is that there are more and more areas in the international field where I think women have some advantages over a man. Not in the diplomatic context necessarily, but in the intuitive sense of how people function, and how trends develop, the feel for things. While it made Henry mad when you mentioned it to him, I think one of the reasons Kissinger was so good in foreign affairs was that he had an almost feminine intuition about how people would react on some issues. This kind of intuition has become more and more important in dealing with people and with evolving issues. Now, of course, physical conditions and communications are such that there is really very little difference between a woman's ability to cope with certain things and a man's. You still have some outposts where you might have to fight them off with spears and that makes a difference. There are still cultures where some will not speak to a woman. We had this case with General Lebed in Moldova who refused to meet with our ambassador who was a woman. He has changed his tone since then. He is talking to a lot of woman journalists these days. But you have to know how to deal with that.

Some of the younger women still have problems because they have been brought up to assume they are going to be treated as equals and are usually shocked to discover that they sometimes aren't.

Q: Well, finally, do you have any suggestions for improvements or changes in the Department or the Foreign Service?

MAUTNER: That is a hard question to answer. We haven't really come to grips with the consequences of the information revolution. Decisions are still being made by one or two people, but one or two people can't absorb all the information that is necessary to make a decision. And that is not just in the United States, that is everywhere these days.

Q: How could that ever be changed?

MAUTNER: That is a darn good question. With computers you now have access to everything, but the more information you have the harder it is to make a decision, which means that fewer and fewer decisions can be made wisely when it is necessary to make one quickly.

Q: And they will be second guessed very easily.

MAUTNER: Yes, everybody will have access to the pertinent data. There is no anonymity in the process. People are not able to master a problem quietly and learn from their mistakes without being shot down for having made a mistake. They are immediately targeted and out. This kind of thing. That is the other aspect of it.

I don't know what is going to happen. I suspect decisions are going to be made on less and less sound grounds. So far, the amazing part is that we have been able to cope as well as we have, but the international spotlight on people's instantaneous reactions, CNN providing the basis on which decisions have to be made, that is a whole new world. It took us a number of years to cope with the post-1945 world, and this is going to take even longer, I think, because the changes are even more fundamental. I can't think of any recommendations except going at it step by step, by slow step.

One other thing I would like to add is the Foreign Service system as it has now evolved does not cater to oddballs. There is more pressure to fit into a pattern of conformity. When there was a far more coherent structure, people knew who the oddballs were and sort of cherished them; they had lots of friends and patrons. Those were people who were valued because they provided insights and ingenious inputs. They often had a spark of genius, even though they didn't fit into the routine structure of the system. Such people are now no longer tolerated.

Q: It would be very hard these days for them because of the rigid promotion system we have, this up and out business, and the clawing at one another to get ahead.

MAUTNER: Yes. The old Foreign Service when I started had about 6-800 officers. Everybody knew everyone's strengths and weaknesses, and the weaknesses were compensated for by somebody else's strengths. You kept the oddballs there because they were invaluable at times. Now that is all gone.

Q: No, now you have a great deal of bitterness by those who reach FSO-1 and don't go any higher, are shuffled out, who may be excellent officers with good experience.

MAUTNER: There ought to be some system for preserving this type of experience in some capacity; not everyone has to go to the top. Now, you have seen a recent case here with an individual who, shall we say, raised a lot of hackles, caused a lot of friction, Mr. Holbrooke, who evidently had lots of enemies. And yet he is doing the kind of job that nobody else could do at this particular stage, but he probably could not have been tolerated in the system itself to come up through the ranks to the top.

Q: Probably Henry Kissinger would have had a hard time being tolerated within the system.

MAUTNER: Exactly, but there are a number of people like that who have gotten out and gone into other jobs, then come back at a later date, whose abilities are very useful at

certain times and headaches at others. The question is how do you maintain them during the fallow period. I think we are throwing away a lot of talent.

Q: Finally, looking back on your career in the intelligence field in INR, how do you see the role of CIA developing in the future? It has been under attack recently. What role will it play and how close will it be to the Department?

MAUTNER: The CIA, of course, has in one way outlived its original mission and hasn't yet made the complete structural changes needed, because it had built up too much of an institutional bureaucracy to change quickly. What is happening today is the consequence of all of the earlier attempts to reform it. First they took the gaff for the Bay of Pigs. Well, when you get down to it, the original plans would have held very well if people had been willing to put in the force necessary to carry it off. CIA is blamed for everything that goes wrong in such operations.

The attempt to get rid of a lot of deadwood accumulated in the post-war years backfired. It involved people who had been useful on the front lines in the early days but didn't fit into the present environment. The management installed in the late '70s began ruthlessly throwing out, getting rid of all this so-called deadwood, disregarding 20 or 30 years of loyal service, just giving them pink slips and you are out. This was terrible for morale and also asking for trouble because these people knew an awful lot and they could tell it later on.

Then you had a tremendous analytical outfit, which existed totally separate from the operational side which ran its own world behind the scenes. It operated more or less on its own with no control except when you had a very strong leader running the show. Few politicians wanted to get too deeply involved because you didn't want to know about a lot of the activities that went on.

So you rarely had a director who really understood the business of overseeing a restructuring. When insiders like Colby got in, some got too moralistic about what they did. When an outsider like Casey got in, he tended to replicate his experiences in the OSS

and had no qualms about twisting facts and conclusions to suit his purposes. That just added to the problem. Obviously, over a period of time, morale difficulties, dissatisfactions, the stultification, the tendency to play bureaucratic politics rather than be objective, etc. took a toll. Plus a lot of infighting for position. We fought with them constantly over NIEs and elsewhere because some tried to play political games with the estimates. The agency shouldn't be playing political games, it should be objective.

So, the problem today is an accumulation of a long history and has to be dealt with as a whole, but it can't be done under a press spotlight or a congressional one. Many of the loudest congressmen don't know what they are dealing with here, they just want the headlines. It should be done quietly and behind the scenes. But the president evidently does not feel he is strong enough or familiar enough with the problem to tackle it that way.

Q: Well, thank you Martha, it has been very enlightening and interesting. This is Thomas Dunnigan and I have been talking today with Martha Mautner who has recently completed almost 50 years of service in the field of foreign affairs. The date is November 7, 1995.

End of interview